**Course Syllabus: American History, 1877 – Present:**

**Theme:** This course examines the history of the United States of America from 1877 to the present. The federal republic has withstood challenges to its national security and expanded the rights and roles of its citizens. The episodes of its past have shaped the nature of the country today and prepared it to attend to the challenges of tomorrow. Understanding how these events came to pass and their meaning for today’s citizens is the purpose of this course. The concepts of historical thinking introduced in earlier grades continue to build with students locating and analyzing primary and secondary sources from multiple perspectives to draw conclusions.

**TOPIC: HISTORICAL THINKING AND SKILLS**

*Students apply skills by utilizing a variety of resources to construct theses and support or refute contentions made by others. Alternative explanations of historical events are analyzed and questions of historical inevitability are explored.*

**CONTENT STATEMENTS:**

1. Historical events provide opportunities to examine alternative courses of action.

2. The use of primary and secondary sources of information includes an examination of the credibility of each source.

3. Historians develop theses and use evidence to support or refute positions.

4. Historians analyze cause, effect, sequence and correlation in historical events, including multiple causation and long- and short-term causal relations.

**TOPIC: HISTORIC DOCUMENTS**

*Some documents in American history have considerable importance for the development of the nation. Students use historical thinking to examine key documents which form the basis for the United States of America.*

**CONTENT STATEMENTS:**

5. The Declaration of Independence reflects an application of Enlightenment ideas to the grievances of British subjects in the American colonies.

6. The Northwest Ordinance addressed a need for government in the Northwest Territory and established precedents for the future governing of the United States.

7. Problems facing the national government under the Articles of Confederation led to the drafting of the Constitution of the United States. The framers of the Constitution applied ideas of Enlightenment in conceiving the new government.

8. The Federalist Papers and the Anti-Federalist Papers structured the national debate over the ratification of the Constitution of the United States.

9. The Bill of Rights is derived from English law, ideas of the Enlightenment, the experiences of the American colonists, early experiences of self-government and the national debate over the ratification of the Constitution of the United States.

**TOPIC: INDUSTRIALIZATION AND PROGRESSIVISM (1877-1920)**

*Ignited by post-Civil War demand and fueled by technological advancements, large-scale industrialization began in the United States during the late 1800s. Growing industries enticed foreign immigration, fostered urbanization, gave rise to the American labor movement and developed the infrastructure that facilitated the settling of the West. A period of progressive reform emerged in response to political corruption and practices of big business.*

**CONTENT STATEMENTS:**

10. The rise of corporations, heavy industry, mechanized farming and technological innovations transformed the American economy from an agrarian to an increasingly urban industrial society.

11. The rise of industrialization led to a rapidly expanding workforce. Labor organizations grew amidst unregulated working conditions, laissez-faire policies toward big business, and violence toward supporters of organized labor.

12. Immigration, internal migration and urbanization transformed American life.

13. Following Reconstruction, old political and social structures reemerged and racial discrimination was institutionalized.

14. The Progressive era was an effort to address the ills of American society stemming from industrial capitalism, urbanization and political corruption.

**TOPIC: FOREIGN AFFAIRS FROM IMPERIALISM TO POST-WORLD WAR I (1898-1930)**

*The industrial and territorial growth of the United States fostered expansion overseas. Greater involvement in the world set the stage for American participation in World War I and attempts to preserve post-war peace.*

**CONTENT STATEMENTS:**

15. As a result of overseas expansion, the Spanish-American War and World War I, the United States emerged as a world power.

16. After WWI, the United States pursued efforts to maintain peace in the world. However, as a result of the national debate over the Versailles Treaty ratification and the League of Nations, the United States moved away from the role of world peacekeeper and limited its involvement in international affairs.

**TOPIC: PROSPERITY, DEPRESSION AND THE NEW DEAL (1919-1941)**

*The post-World War I period was characterized by economic, social and political turmoil. Post- war prosperity brought about changes to American popular culture. However, economic disruptions growing out the war years led to worldwide depression. The United States attempted to deal with the Great Depression through economic programs created by the federal government.*

**CONTENT STATEMENTS:**

17. Racial intolerance, anti-immigrant attitudes and the Red Scare contributed to social unrest after World War I.

18. An improved standard of living for many, combined with technological innovations in communication, transportation and industry, resulted in social and cultural changes and tensions.

19. Movements such as the Harlem Renaissance, African-American migration, women’s suffrage and Prohibition all contributed to social change.

20. The Great Depression was caused, in part, by the federal government’s monetary policies, stock market speculation, and increasing consumer debt. The role of the federal government expanded as a result of the Great Depression.

**TOPIC: FROM ISOLATION TO WORLD WAR (1930-1945)**

*The isolationist approach to foreign policy meant U.S. leadership in world affairs diminished after World War I. Overseas, certain nations saw the growth of tyrannical governments which reasserted their power through aggression and created conditions leading to the Second World War. After Pearl Harbor, the United States entered World War II, which changed the country’s focus from isolationism to international involvement.*

**CONTENT STATEMENTS:**

21. During the 1930s, the U.S. government attempted to distance the country from earlier interventionist policies in the Western Hemisphere as well as retain an isolationist approach to events in Europe and Asia until the beginning of WWII.

22. The United States mobilization of its economic and military resources during World War II brought significant changes to American society.

**TOPIC: THE COLD WAR (1945-1991)**

*The United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) emerged as the two strongest powers in international affairs. Ideologically opposed, they challenged one another in a series of confrontations known as the Cold War. The costs of this prolonged contest weakened the U.S.S.R. so that it collapsed due to internal upheavals as well as American pressure. The Cold War had social and political implications in the United States.*

**CONTENT STATEMENTS:**

23. Use of atomic weapons changed the nature of war, altered the balance of power and began the nuclear age.

24. The United States followed a policy of containment during the Cold War in response to the spread of communism.

25. The Second Red Scare and McCarthyism reflected Cold War fears in American society.

26. The Cold War and conflicts in Korea and Vietnam influenced domestic and international politics.

27. The collapse of communist governments in Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R. brought an end to the Cold War.

**TOPIC: SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES (1945-1994)**

*A period of post-war prosperity allowed the United States to undergo fundamental social change. Adding to this change was an emphasis on scientific inquiry, the shift from an industrial to a technological/service economy, the impact of mass media, the phenomenon of suburban and Sun Belt migrations, the increase in immigration and the expansion of civil rights.*

**CONTENT STATEMENTS:**

28. Following World War II, the United States experienced a struggle for racial and gender equality and the extension of civil rights.

29. The postwar economic boom, greatly affected by advances in science, produced epic changes in American life.

30. The continuing population flow from cities to suburbs, the internal migrations from the Rust Belt to the Sun Belt, and the increase in immigration resulting from passage of the 1965 Immigration Act have had social and political effects.

31. Political debates focused on the extent of the role of government in the economy, environmental protection, social welfare and national security.

**TOPIC: UNITED STATES AND THE POST-COLD WAR WORLD (1991 TO PRESENT)**

*The United States emerged from the Cold War as a dominant leader in world affairs amidst a globalized economy, political terrorism and the proliferation of nuclear weapons.*

**CONTENT STATEMENTS:**

32. Improved global communications, international trade, transnational business organizations, overseas competition and the shift from manufacturing to service industries have impacted the American economy.

33. The United States faced new political, national security and economic challenges in the post-Cold War world and following the attacks on September 11, 2001.